

2015 PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

San Luis Obispo County Parks and Recreation programs offer unquestionable value by providing a rich variety of recreational opportunities. San Luis Obispo County residents use them every day of the year, but that is just the beginning. The business from County Parks and Recreation generates jobs, funnels dollars to local businesses, increases property values, stimulates volunteer support, provides job training for youth, and fosters a strong sense of community by bringing people together. It's one of the best investments San Luis Obispo County has ever made and will continue to be one of the best investments in our future.

National statistics show parks, open space, and recreation programs are vital to our health and economy. Besides the obvious place to play, parks help reduce crime and lower costs for law enforcement and incarceration, increase work productivity, attract tourist dollars, and are the vital component in livable communities.

This report describes the accomplishments over the last year and the Commission's goals and recommendations for the coming year. These are supportive of the County Goals of a safe, healthy, livable, prosperous and well-governed community and support the Department's Strategic Plan and effort to achieve accreditation.

The Commission asks that the Board continue to show support for the Parks and Recreation needs of the County by:

- Supporting efforts to achieve accreditation, especially the need to complete a County-wide Parks Needs Assessment
- Maintain General Fund support for parks to demonstrate the County's commitment to the public good served by park and recreation opportunities
- Consider providing additional resources to address deferred maintenance projects

The San Luis Obispo County Park Commission stands enthusiastically ready to assist the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Board of Supervisors in any way we can.

THE POWER OF PARKS

Do you know the power of your local parks and recreation? Yes, they provide beautiful green spaces and fun programs, but they do so much more and the benefits are immense. Learn more at www.nrpa.org/power-of-parks and watch the video.

PARKS HAVE ENVIRONMENTAL POWER

1 ACRE OF TREES
absorbs the carbon dioxide produced by
DRIVING A CAR 11,000 MILES.

PARKS HAVE HEALTH POWER

Increased access to places for physical activity leads to a
25% increase
in people exercising
3 or more days a week.

PARKS HAVE SAFETY POWER

In Macon, GA, a revitalized park that included new programming and beautification efforts
reduced incidents of crime and violence by
50%.

PARKS HAVE COMMUNITY POWER

Parks strengthen community ties and
bring diverse populations together.

Parks have the power to strengthen communities, transform lives, and protect the future.

Parks are the most powerful aspect of every community.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control, Environmental Protection Agency, American Planning Association

National Recreation and Park Association

#PowerOfParks

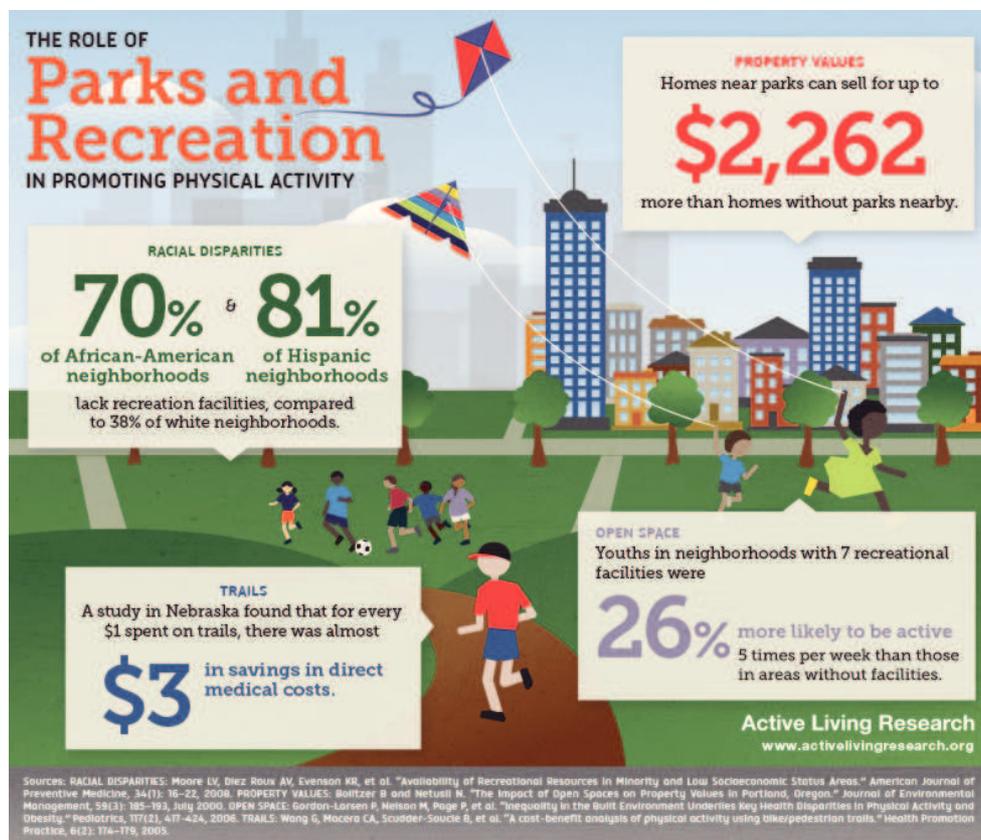
The Commission is committed to a long term strategy for a strong park system for the benefit of people of all ages. National statistics show that parks, open space, and recreation programs are vital to our health, economy and our environment.

County Goals and Parks and Recreation

The County's community wide goals are to provide:

1. A safe community
2. A healthy community
3. A livable community
4. A prosperous community
5. A well-governed community

Unlike any other single department within County government, we believe a strong Parks and Recreation program will help achieve all of these goals when a strong leadership commitment is developed for both resources and strategic partnerships.



2015 Parks and Recreation Commission Accomplishments:

Department Created

After many years of the Commission advocating for the need for a stand-alone Department of Parks and Recreation, the Board established the Department. This allows for the following benefits:

- Direct input regarding parks and recreation issues to the Board and Administrative Office
- Improvement of accountability by developing tracking and reporting of services
- Streamlines decision-making and responsiveness to the public
- Improves service delivery to visitors

Strategic Plan Developed

A Strategic Plan outlining three main goals with twelve objectives was created to guide the next five years for the Department. This plan will be reviewed and revised annually. The five-year vision of the plan is to pursue accreditation by the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies and to achieve accreditation by the year 2020.

Benefits for the public:

- Assurance and validation of well-administered services in accord with approved professional practices
- Potential for external financial support and savings to the public
- External recognition of a quality governmental service
- Holds an agency accountable to the public and ensures responsiveness to meet their needs
- Improves customer and quality services

Benefits for the agency:

- Public and political recognition
- Increased efficiency and evidence of accountability
- Answers the question, "How are we doing?" through extensive self evaluation
- Identifies areas for improvement by comparing an agency against national standards of best practice
- Enhances staff teamwork and pride by engaging all staff in the process
- Creates an environment for regular review of operations, policies and procedures, and promotes continual improvement
- Forces written documentation of policies and procedures

Progress on projects

- **Cayucos Pier:** This major project was completed in October 2015 with a grand re-opening in the community of Cayucos. This project highlighted the role that parks and park facilities play in creating a sense of community. The town rallied around this project and the pier is the focal point for the town. Re-opening of the pier was a major success and significant achievement due to the complicated nature of a project of this size in a marine environment.
- **Certified Bob Jones Pathway Environmental Impact Report:** The Bob Jones Trail is a major undertaking in the County that will take many years to realize, but the vision and alignment have been set through the planning efforts of creating a viable alignment of the trail from the Octagon Barn to the Ontario Road parking area. Certification of the EIR by the Board of Supervisors allows the planning and fundraising to continue so that this project can be realized.

- **San Miguel Park Improvements:** Progress was made in developing design alternatives, holding community meetings and finalizing the direction for the project. Construction bid drawings are being completed for an anticipated start in Fall 2016.
- **Rios Caledonia Adobe:** Repairs to the adobe walls were completed to assist in the preservation of this historic structure. The repairs included a window into the wall so visitors can see the actual wall construction underneath the exterior plaster.
- **Jack Ready Park:** Jack's Helping Hands successfully completed grading and installed a restroom facility using funds provided by the County.

Dairy Creek Golf Course

County staff stepped in to operate the entire facility when the prior concessionaire declared bankruptcy and abruptly left the facility. Coupled with the drought conditions and the reduction in reclaimed water supplied to the course due to the reduced prison population and water conservation at the California Men's Colony, staff did a remarkable job keeping the course open to the public. A new concession was awarded for the operation of the pro shop and restaurant. Water continues to be an issue and the Department continues to explore options for the future of this course.

Website

A new County Parks website was successfully launched which modernizes the information available to the public about the County Park resources. The look, design, navigation and ease of use creates a better user experience to help visitors learn about the parks in the County Park System.

Reservation System

The Camava reservation system continues to expand and grow in assisting the Department and the visitors in planning their visits to the parks. Visitors are better served by a 24 hour availability and easy to use platform that has seen the parks reservation use significantly increase. This allows staff to better plan for busy reservation periods and track visitor attendance. We began the new reservations in September 2013 with 71 transactions for \$7,071 and in September of 2016 completed 728 transactions for \$100,484.

Quimby Fee projects

- **Creston Community Center:** Funding was provided to assist in completing the Creston Community Center. The Quimby funds assisted with the electrical work and the fire sprinkler systems required to make the facility fully functional.
- **Nipomo Park Gazebo:** Funding was provided and a groundbreaking held for the Nipomo Rotary to begin construction of a Gazebo in Nipomo Community Park. The Gazebo will be a focal point for visitors to the park and can be used for special events including concerts and weddings.

2016 Parks and Recreation Commission Goals and Recommendations:

1. Complete a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment.

Since the acceptance of the Parks and Recreation Element in 2006, the Commission has recommended the completion of a Countywide Needs Assessment many times. This critical roadmap for decision-makers will establish priorities, needs and wants from the input of all

county regions and all user groups. This is a required element of the accreditation process and we would like to see this complete within the next two years.

The questions the Needs Assessment should ask and answer include:

- Assess current San Luis Obispo County park, recreation, and open space services (in terms of the facilities and programs provided within the County as well as the quality of existing facilities and programs). This would include determining the level of service and/or acres currently provided per 1,000 residents for existing lands, facilities, and programs;
- Research key areas, each to be prioritized separately, the:
 - 1) Need for additional parkland (neighborhood, community, and regional),
 - 2) Need for additional recreation (outside of parks and natural areas),
 - 3) Need for additional natural areas,
 - 4) Need for additional recreation programs; and
 - 5) Existing and anticipated future maintenance priorities.
- Compare San Luis Obispo County trends against industry trends and benchmarks;
- Determine the communities in the greatest need for additional parks, recreation programs and/or natural areas;
- Work with stakeholders (the public, relevant agencies, Parks and Recreation staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Board of Supervisors); and,
- Recommend specific method(s) of financing high priority park, natural area, recreation projects, and facility maintenance (both in terms of initial purchase/set-up and long-term maintenance).

2. Continue making progress on existing projects including:

Bob Jones Pathway and Octagon Barn Trailhead projects;
Morro Bay Golf Course irrigation line replacement;
Santa Margarita Lake Boat-In camp facilities;
Morro Bay to Cayucos connector;
Cayucos 1st Street Accessway;
San Miguel Park expansion;
Nipomo Community Park improvements;
Templeton to Atascadero Connector Trail;
Avila to Harford Pier trail;
Santa Margarita to Garden Farms multi-use trail;
Jack Ready Park Development;
Biddle Park Playground replacement;
Norma Rose Park;
San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden hardscape improvements;
Nipomo Community Park Playground replacement
Los Osos Park Tennis Court and Fencing
Lopez Lake Campaneros Campground improvements

3. Complete the remaining Outstanding Trail Offers.

Staff has made great strides in completing the review and acceptance of the Outstanding Trail Offers (OTO). These segments are each for individual parcels and will not result in a complete section of trail that could be opened to the public. Therefore, as these easements are accepted

they will be placed into inventory for a future date when additional segments may be secured to provide a complete trail.

The Commission recommends the remaining OTO's be completed. Staff should continue the process of reviewing the mapped easements with the TAC (Trails Advisory Committee) as easements offers become ready to accept. Once all of the easements are identified, segments can be prioritized. A good trails network responds to and distributes demand by providing safe ways for people to get to recreation features.

4. Maintain General Fund support.

The Commission sincerely appreciates the Board of Supervisors support for parks and understands that many other services and programs compete for limited General Fund support. The Board's support for County Parks and recreation has enabled staffing and services to remain consistent and allows more to be accomplished for the benefit of the public we serve. Though the operating budget is not optimal and deferred maintenance continues to grow, funding has been maintained to provide safe and usable parks and recreation areas.

The Commission recommends that the Board continue to support no reductions in the General Fund support for Parks. This had been tremendously helpful in maintaining safe, usable parks and recreation areas for our communities and our visitors. The Commission also recommends that the Department develop a deferred maintenance plan and that the Board consider providing General Fund support to implement that plan.

5. Expand Park and Recreation Services to Underserved Communities.

Continue to work to find opportunities for enhanced Park facilities and recreational programming in underserved communities.

7. Locate Grants and alternative funding:

Commission encourages staff to continue a creative and aggressive program to search for grants and alternative funding sources to aid in park improvements and address deferred maintenance. Specifically investigate additional funding for trail construction and maintenance including SB1183 fees.

8. Enhance Marketing and Branding of County Park and Recreation programs and facilities.

The marketing and branding efforts for County Parks and Recreation have been effective and are particularly evident in the website. The Marketing and Promotions team developed marketing strategies, advertisements and promotions. Staff conducted marketing campaigns to Los Angeles, the Central Valley and Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. Advertisements were placed in the major newspapers, of those communities and using the web list of Park customers. Revenues have steadily increased as a result.

The Commission recommends increasing and expanding these efforts to create more visibility and desirability in multiple markets, as well as utilizing Park logos and signage at facilities to allow users to identify County Parks and their offerings quickly. We also recommend an evaluation of current efforts to determine the return on investment for each campaign, evaluate extending or repeating the campaign and developing new ideas for marketing.

9. Create a sustainable Park System with the help of cities:

We must begin to provide for both current and future needs. Our commitment must be based upon the understanding that a sustainable park program is an economic and social benefit for us. Develop a strategy with the cities and large user groups to create a sustainable Park system and provide more opportunities for the public by sharing resources.

It is important to provide parks, trails, and open space, but how can we fund them? One way is to partner with the cities to explore:

- A. Re-allocation of existing revenues;
- B. Setting-aside a percentage of the budget for future parks;
- C. Requesting a modest increase in sales tax to fund land purchases and provide for O&M;
- D. Utilizing property transfer fees or voter-approved assessments to build an economically stable service base.

10. Develop Strategic Partnerships.

Create a plan on how to cultivate strategic partnerships and develop an ongoing community relations program to gain support and visibility for parks and recreation.

11. Create a County Recreation Council.

Form a countywide council, including cities, to investigate ways to provide more services with existing resources and facilities.

12. Enhance focus on Recreation Programming.

Create methods to add recreation programming as a separate fund within the Parks Department.

13. Increase Concessionaires.

Explore ways to add concessionaires for added services and revenue (e.g Vista Lago).

14. Regional Open Space.

Explore the possibility and the benefits of whether the Parks and Recreation Department can implement or help implement the Conservation and Open Space Element, needed to protect resources and create future public open spaces.

15. Trail Corridors.

Work with County Public Works to maintain and enforce the clearance requirements established in the County Rights-Of-Way policy for the establishment of trails and trail corridors within the County.